

Mr. Chairman, I have been intrigued by the debate that has been transpiring here. I wanted to come to the floor to make one simple point, and that is that I appreciate the efforts on behalf of the Financial Services Committee and Chairman Frank to start demystifying the process. There is a lot of talk about supporting of shareholder rights and what not. But the fact is that we don't have a uniform system in this country that actually guarantees people the right to exercise corporate democracy in ways that most people would take for granted. In terms of the most important stakeholders, the people who own these corporations, they are too often treated like children that need to be kept at bay. You don't have to read very many business pages in the New York Times, just for the last year, to discover areas of systematic abuse in terms of what anybody would expect to be the treatment of shareholders. And, unfortunately, that is aided and abetted by government policy.

I appreciate what is happening with the Financial Services Committee to take some steps to try and demystify the process. I see this as one simple step to allow shareholders just an advisory vote on compensation. I thought it was a pretty good idea. I thought it was being part of a larger conversation. I think it is a warning shot about corporate behavior and to State regulators to take seriously the rights of the people who own these companies. All of us, I think, support capitalism. But the way that the shareholders are treated must make us be suspect.

Then on top of this, I hear the amendment from my friend from Florida. Again, I may be a little biased, getting my information from the business pages of the newspaper, but the Sunday before last, it was fascinating looking at the hash that has been made by SEC in terms of trying to explain what total compensation is. It is almost now beyond the capacity of individuals to understand because we get in here, make these distinctions that torture and twist information.

I thought the proposal that is brought forward by Financial Services, was pretty straightforward. Yet this amendment again would start parsing that out, distinguishing between different types of compensation and making it harder for shareholders to have a clear understanding.

I would respectfully suggest that we vote against this amendment; we support the underlying bill; and most important, we support the philosophy from Financial Services to demystify corporate governance, that we give a little more respect to the rights of shareholders and our responsibility as people who establish the rules of the game.

I think the Sarbanes-Oxley legislation was rushed through after years of sort of holding it at bay in the aftermath of scandals where Congress wouldn't act, to the point where Congress was forced to act.

I appreciate what is happening in the Financial Services Committee where they are looking at this subject in a systematic fashion. I look forward to subsequent proposals that come forward so that we can give shareholders the rights that they deserve as the people who are after all really the owners of our capitalistic system.